

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (canceled).

2. (currently amended): A light diffusing plate comprising:  
a birefringent film containing dispersed therein minute regions differing from the  
birefringent film in birefringent characteristics; and

wherein

the minute regions comprise thermoplastic liquid-crystal polymers,  
a difference in refractive index between the birefringent film and the minute  
regions, in a direction  $\Delta n^1$  perpendicular to an axis direction in which linearly polarized  
light has a maximum transmittance, is 0.03 or larger,

a different in refractive index between the birefringent film and the minute  
regions in the axis direction  $\Delta n^2$  is not larger than 80% of  $\Delta n^1$ ,

the minute regions are dispersedly contained in the birefringent film by phase  
separation and each has a length in the  $\Delta n^1$  direction of 0.05 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ , and

~~A light diffusing plate according to claim 1, wherein said~~the thermoplastic liquid-  
crystal polymer is a thermoplastic branched liquid-crystal polymer having side chains  
each containing a segment represented by general formula (I): -Y-Z, wherein Y is one of

a polymethylene chain, a polyoxymethylene chain and a polyoxyethylene chain branching from a main chain and Z is a para-substituted cyclic compound.

Claims 3-5. (cancelled).

6. (currently amended): A light diffusing plate according to claim 2, wherein two or more birefringent films ~~which~~ are superposed on each other so that the  $\Delta n^1$  directions of each of the birefringent films are parallel to those for one or two of the adjacent layer.

Claims 7-9. (cancelled).

10. (currently amended): An optical element according to claim ~~9~~14, wherein a transmission axis of the polarizing plate is parallel to the  $\Delta n^2$  direction for the light diffusing plate.

Claims 11-12. (cancelled).

13. (currently amended): A liquid-crystal display comprising a liquid-crystal cell and disposed on one or each side thereof the optical element of any one of claims ~~claim~~ 10, 15, 16, and 17.

14. (new): An optical element comprising a multilayer structure which comprises the light diffusing plate of claim 2 or claim 6 and at least one of a polarizing plate and a phase plate.

15. (new): An optical element, comprising a multilayer structure, which comprises:  
a light diffusing plate comprising a birefringent film containing dispersed therein minute regions differing from the birefringent film in birefringent characteristics; wherein

the minute regions comprise thermoplastic liquid-crystal polymers,  
a difference in refractive index between the birefringent film and the minute regions, in a direction  $\Delta n^1$  perpendicular to an axis direction in which linearly polarized light has a maximum transmittance, is 0.03 or larger,

a difference in refractive index between the birefringent film and the minute regions in the axis direction  $\Delta n^2$  is not larger than 80% of  $\Delta n^1$ , and

the minute regions are dispersedly contained in the birefringent film by phase separation and each has a length in the  $\Delta n^1$  direction of 0.05 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ ;

at least one polarizing plate; and

a phase plate;

wherein a transmission axis of the polarizing plate is parallel to the  $\Delta n^2$  direction for the light diffusing plate.

16. (new): An optical element, comprising a multilayer structure, which comprises:  
a light diffusing plate comprising two or more birefringent films, each containing dispersed therein minute regions differing from the birefringent film in birefringent characteristics; wherein

the minute regions comprise thermoplastic liquid-crystal polymers,  
a difference in refractive index between the birefringent film and the minute regions, in a direction  $\Delta n^1$  perpendicular to an axis direction in which linearly polarized light has a maximum transmittance, is 0.03 or larger,

a difference in refractive index between the birefringent film and the minute regions in the axis direction  $\Delta n^2$  is not larger than 80% of  $\Delta n^1$ , and

the minute regions are dispersedly contained in the birefringent film by phase separation and each has a length in the  $\Delta n^1$  direction of 0.05 to 500  $\mu\text{m}$ ,

the two or more birefringent films are superimposed on each other so that the  $\Delta n^1$  direction of each of the birefringent films are parallel to those for one or two of the adjacent layers;

at least one polarizing plate; and

a phase plate;

wherein a transmission axis of the polarizing plate is parallel to the  $\Delta n^2$  direction for the light diffusing plate.

**AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F. R. § 1.111**

U.S. Application No. 09/468,085

**Q57340**

17. (new): A liquid-crystal display comprising a liquid-crystal cell and disposed on one or each side thereof the light diffusing plate of claim 2 or claim 6.

18. (new): A liquid-crystal display comprising a liquid-crystal cell and disposed on one or each side thereof the optical element of claim 14.